

# Technology not the answer to school violence, officials say

The Associated Press

DALLAS — As school violence escalates, outraged parents have demanded increased security, including the use of guards, surveillance cameras and metal detectors.

But increasingly, educators, school security officials and students are calling that approach too narrow. They say over-reliance on high-tech security tactics won't keep schools safe in the long run.

"Surveillance cameras, lights, metal detectors, dope dogs running through the halls, gun-sniffing dogs running through the halls — all these things can be effective," said Capt. Chuck Brawner of the Spring Branch school district police department in suburban Houston.

"Armed police officers can be effective. But without other programs, what good are they?"

Since the 1993 school year began, a number of violent incidents have erupted at Texas schools.

In Houston, a food fight turned into a melee, with five teachers and several students hurt, 10 students arrested and a pair of brass knuckles confiscated. In Marshall, Texas, deputies nabbed a 17-year-old who paid \$10 for the gun and 11 bullets he brought to school to retaliate against two teens who'd beaten him.

In Dallas, a 15-year-old was shot to death steps away from the school office; another high school student was stabbed in a campus hallway.

School officials say they know parents want quick action. Often that means buying something tangible.

"It's a field day right now for the alarm and metal detector people. Metal detectors are a very glitzy kind of thing, but they don't work" as a total solution, said Peter Blauvelt, head of school security in Prince George's County, Md., and chairman of the National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers.

Dallas Independent School District Superintendent Chad Woolery announced a plan last week to buy about 200 walk-through metal detectors at \$2,300 apiece.

Nearly 50 school districts in Texas now have full-time police departments, and countless others use city officers on campus.

Despite the districts' show of force, educators and police say they know that a student intent on bringing something deadly to school can sneak it in through a side entrance or window.

The students know, too. "Anyone can still get a gun in," said Sherida Thomas, a freshman at Kimball High in Dallas. She suggested that school officials search every student each time they enter a school, but acknowledged that it would be impossible.

Many experts tout violence prevention as a more complete solution than increased technology. Approaches vary, but many programs focus on peer mediation, in which trained students act as mediators to defuse potential fights.

Some districts are making anti-violence lessons part of classroom teaching.

Such efforts got a boost this summer when President Clinton introduced his Safe Schools Act of 1993. The bill asks Congress for \$75 million next year and \$100 million in 1995 for grants to help school districts combat violence.

Districts that win the grants could use only one-third for security measures such as locks, metal detectors and police.

The remainder must pay for violence prevention activities such as peer mediation or to create safe, after-school programs, an anti-violence curriculum and disciplinary alternatives for violent students.

While experts debate the best approaches to school safety, a comprehensive study of campus crime hasn't been done since 1976.

"We don't know the trends, and we don't know what works and what doesn't work" other than as anecdotes, Blauvelt said.

Meanwhile, he said, one of the best ways that any district can gauge its security situation is to note every incident for a month or two, from tardiness to weapons violations.

But just taking away the guns won't solve the problem, he said.

"I'm being very candid. What do we do with a generation of kids that life has no value for? ... That's why, so often, no matter what strategy the school implements, it becomes almost a game for some kids."

**"Armed police officers can be effective. But without other programs, what good are they?"**

- Capt. Chuck Brawner

## Bugle

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"I make sure people have the resources to study," she said. "I can't make them study, unfortunately."

Toler stressed the fact that Reid has done well all four of her years in the band.

"She has been a class leader from the first day she was here," he said. "She was selected as an alternate to the bugle rank because she was worthy of the position, not because she is a woman."

Toler said he soon expects to see a female drum major and other female members of the bugle rank.

"We've already had a female drum major alternate," he said. "Women in the band are not an issue any longer. The band has led the Corps in that regard."

**"She has been a class leader from the first day she was here."**

- Col. Ray Toler, band director

Reid said she feels it may be easier for other women who join the band to have higher positions because the barrier of never having a woman in her position has been broken.

"They just have to take the opportunity," she said.

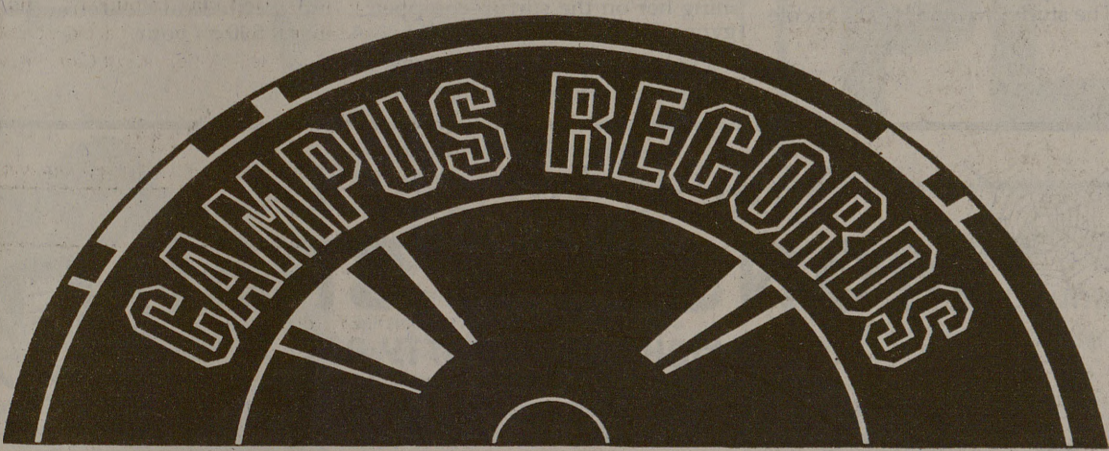
Reid said she has not really faced any major obstacles because she is a woman, but she did feel that she had to try harder as a freshman to prove herself.

Jason Hearnberger, band commander, said that as a freshman, he did not think it made any difference to him or other classmates that Reid is a woman.

Reid said she joined the band because she grew up hearing about it, and she thought they were awesome.

She said she did not know what to expect from the band but thought it would be exciting, and it has lived up to her expectations.

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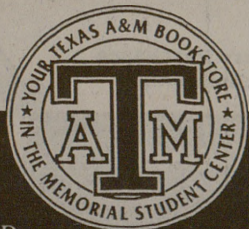
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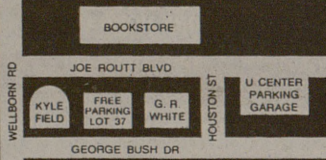
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